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Phil Wieland
Times Columnist

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To find JFK's brain, dig back and to the left

I wasn't aware of it (apparently I missed that particular edition of the *National Enquirer*), but John F. Kennedy's brain is missing.

Empty-headed politicians are as common as crows in a cornfield, but they usually are alive, although it's difficult to tell with some. Kennedy's missing brain is another matter and cause for some concern because of a potential (dare I say it?) conspiracy and cover-up.

The mystery of the missing brain was brought to my attention in a letter from Craig Bidwell of Lincoln, Ill. Bidwell, 39, was bitten by the assassination bug when he read the book "Six Seconds in Dallas" at the tender age of 10.

He spent the past five years searching for the missing brain and thinks he's found it. Proof would involve exhuming the caskets of Kennedy and his two infant children from their Arlington National Cemetery graves, something Bidwell wants the media's help in accomplishing.

While looking for my shovel, I looked into this, discovered the brain might or might not be missing, might have been destroyed or might be in an Argentine lab chatting with the brains of Hitler, Jimmy Hoffa and Rex, the Wonder Horse.

It's a mystery cloaked in an enigma wrapped in a smoking jacket, probably with extra-long arms and funny fasteners down the back, but modern forensic science finally might resolve the controversy over the entry point of the fatal bullet if the brain were found, Bidwell said.

The brain game

As Kevin Costner said so well and so often in the film, "Back and to the left. Back and to the left. Back and to the left."

The brain was first reported missing from the *National Archives* in 1972. However, Steve Tilley, archivist in charge of the JFK collection, said it's never been proven the brain was ever there.

Among the items examined and sorted by JFK's secretary, Evelyn Lincoln, after Kennedy's death was a trunk, and the inventory of the trunk's contents included "gross matter" and "tissue slides."

"Gross matter" could have been the brain, other organs or JFK's *Playboy* magazine collection. Nobody knows because the trunk was taken by Robert Kennedy's secretary, Tilley said. When the autopsy material was returned to the archives in 1966, the gross material was gone.

"I have no idea if it was in the trunk," Tilley said. "I don't know of anybody who does know. All we have is what was on the inventory. The photos of the autopsy show the damage to the brain, but the evidence is conflicting on the entry wounds and that is what led to the controversy."

Hmmmm...

Bidwell said that on a dark but not stormy night in 1967, while 300 troops guarded the cemetery, Kennedy and his infant son and daughter were reburied in their permanent grave sites. Ted and Robert Kennedy reportedly attended the surreptitious ceremony, which also was photographed for the historical record.

Tilley verified the burial occurred, but Bidwell questions its secrecy and why there was a delay in reburying the daughter's casket while a larger vault was brought in. Could the larger vault have been used to stash the canister with Kennedy's pickled skull stuffings?

Was it coincidence the reburial began within hours of testimony in New Orleans that led to the indictment of Clay Shaw in the assassination? Sure, and it was a coincidence the bloodstains in O.J. Simpson's car happened to match Nicole's and Ron's.

Bidwell believes in the assassination conspiracy theory, but his campaign to gain media pressure to find Kennedy's missing brain is off to a slow start. Ten days after he sent his letters to media around the country, I was the first to respond.

I don't mind. I think of all the things I might accomplish ... if I only had a brain.

■ If you wish to contact Phil Wieland, you can e-mail him at wieland@howpubs.com or contact him on the Internet at <http://www.calunet.com/phillw/>

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